

## UNCG CENTENNIAL ORAL HISTORY PROJECT COLLECTION

INTERVIEWEE: Patricia Holder

INTERVIEWER: Missy Foy

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[Begin Side A]

MF: I guess if you could start with some general information like where you're from and when you attended UNCG [The University of North Carolina at Greensboro] and just that sort of general-background type information first.

PH: I am originally from Raleigh and grew up there, went to Millbrook School, which is now in the city limits but was outside the city. I graduated high school in 1965 and entered UNCG in that fall, and it was UNCG at the time. It had just recently become UNCG. We had about 4,000 women and probably a couple of hundred men.

MF: Yes. [laughs]

PH: So it was a very interesting situation on the campus. Having gone to a very small county school, it was a big switch for me, even though by today's standards, it was a pretty small school. I was a Katherine Smith Reynolds Scholar at UNCG, which was very wonderful and exciting, and even today I reflect back on the excitement of that honor. It paid all of my tuition and fees and even a little bit of spending money for books and so forth. There were at that time thirteen Katharine Smith Reynolds Scholars [funded by Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation, Winston-Salem, North Carolina] each year. The competition was statewide, and it was certainly a very wonderful honor and a fabulous scholarship and allowed me, living on a farm, to be able to go to school.

MF: Yes, it was a full four-year—

PH: Full four-year scholarship, yes. And I was an honor student and participated in the honors curriculum—started out as a French major and enjoyed school very much at UNCG. I ended up doing a double major in French and anthropology, the official degree being anthropology with another minor in international studies. I did continue my graduate work at UNCG. Having graduated in '69, I entered the master's program in French in 1969 and did a Master of Arts in Teaching, and then a Master of Arts in French literature, so I have two master's degrees from UNCG.

MF: That's impressive. When did you finish school?

PH: The Master of Arts in Teaching was finished in 1971, and then the thesis was all that remained of the Master of Arts in French, and I completed that in 1972.

MF: I'm just finishing my master's now, so to hear someone say they did two, it's like—

PH: And in two years with summer school all the way through and both were completely—neither one counted the courses from the other so they were both. One was a thirty-six-hour degree, and one was a forty-two-hour degree.

MF: Yes. I did mine in three semesters.

PH: It's—it's a lot.

MF: Yes.

PH: Reflections on UNCG: It was such a beautiful campus. I still remember the first time I ever came here, which was to go to a North Carolina meeting of Future Teachers of America, and I was a member from my high school and came to UNCG because I wanted to attend school here and came for a meeting. It was in the spring, and the cherry trees were in bloom—

MF: Oh, yes.

PH: And it was like a fairyland. It was so beautiful to drive down College Avenue.

MF: Oh yes, with all the white blossoms.

PH: I always remember—oh, just spectacular and the lazy, sort of warm air and the smell of the cherry blossoms hanging in the air always linger with me. They were wonderful memories, and I had a wonderful experience at UNCG. I enjoyed the faculty. A number of faculty members were very attentive and very caring. I thought it was an excellent place to study. I thought the work was challenging. I enjoyed all my courses.

MF: Are there any faculty that stand out, that you remember?

PH: Well, I had a number of faculty that I look back on as being outstanding people in many ways. Dr. Elizabeth Barrineau was my faculty advisor in French, one of my professors and someone whom I came to regard as a friend, and she was a tremendous example for someone to have—of scholarship and kindness and just every kind of good quality. She probably stands out most of all, but I had many outstanding professors. Dr. [Randolph] Bulgin was an English professor I had, and he was excellent. Dr. Warren Ashby was a philosophy professor that I had, and he was a very interesting person whom I got to know. Dr. Franklin Parker [history professor] was another professor whom I knew very well and went to Central America with him in a group from UNCG for the first Institute in Middle America [Middle American Research Institute, founded at Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana, in 1924]—

MF: Wow.

PH: —in 1968, and that was quite an experience. And it was wonderful in many ways, eye opening to anyone from the United States to see what a third-world country is like.

MF: Yes, I've been.

PH: And the—to Middle America?

MF: Yes, I've been around Mexico and Belize.

PH: Yes.

MF: And near Guatemala in that Yucatan.

PH: In that area—Yucatan area. It is just—it's not like anything any of us could ever imagine.

MF: Oh, that's true.

PH: And I grew up very poor in the country on a farm, and I felt extremely wealthy when I was there among the very poorest people living in cardboard huts.

MF: I got bit by a monkey down there.

PH: [laughs]

MF: And got incredibly sick.

PH: That's awful. I didn't have any awful experiences. In fact, I had such a wonderful time. I ate all sorts of things. I tried all the food and never was once sick.

MF: Never got sick? Oh, you're lucky.

PH: I drank the water, ate the food, just had a stomach of iron and loved experiencing it.

MF: I ate clams and apparently seafood was a big no-no.

PH: Oh, well see that may be more recently because when I went, even though some people did have problems, I had no trouble at all. And I really—we lived with families there, and they served this beverage at all of our meals called fresca. Well, it was lime juice, sugar and water. Well, it was water, so it's like I had been avoiding the water all this time and was drinking fresca three times a day.

MF: Yes.

PH: So, at any rate, I just had no problem with it at that time, but that was in 1968, and for some

reason it just worked out okay.

MF: Where, where?

PH: We were in San Salvador.

MF: Oh.

PH: And we traveled to Guatemala. We did go for—

MF: I had friends also that live in Costa Rica.

PH: —about a five day trip. Costa Rica. We were going to Costa Rica and to Honduras, but at that time, as for a lot of times since then, they were just too dangerous to go to.

MF: Yes. Costa Rica is a beautiful place, but I've never gotten a chance to go down and visit my friends, although they sent their nephew up January through March—

PH: Oh, that was—

MF: —because that's their summer vacation.

PH: Right, oh yes, yes, because it's the reverse from us.

MF: Yes, and that was kind of—unfortunately though he didn't speak English very well. He wanted to get a job, and he wanted to save his money and buy a computer, and he tried to get a job, and they thought he was trying to hold up the place and that was just kind of a funny scene. I felt sorry for him.

PH: [laughs] Language barriers can be a problem.

MF: Yes.

PH: I was very happy that I spoke enough Spanish to get by.

MF: Yes. Well, I thought I spoke enough Spanish, but I still managed to get us lost one time.

PH: Oh, that's not hard to do though even if you speak the language.

MF: So, of course, now my husband tells me, "You'll do fine, right? You'll get us everywhere, right?" Well, anyway, getting back—

PH: Oh, okay.

MF: What were some of the courses like that you took? I know you were saying that the course work was challenging and demanding. What kinds of courses stand out? I know they were just general college, but—

PH: Well, I took chemistry freshman year, and I thought that was very good. Science was not my strong suit, but I had had a very good teacher in high school, and I really enjoyed the course here. I enjoyed the lab and the opportunities to do more things than I could have done in high school. I took American history—I'm sorry—world history and that was very interesting, although perhaps a little too rigorous with the teacher that I had. The language courses were just very exciting to me because going to a small school I just had two years of French, and then I started in on conversation and literature and so forth and really enjoyed my literature courses very much, enjoyed all of the French. Everything I did was just outstanding, and I still remember phonetics with Dr. [William] Felt [romance languages professor] and Dr. [James] Atkinson's History of the French Language [romance languages professor], and how we took it from Latin all the way through to modern day French. I was extremely thankful that I knew Latin because that came in very handy—just every type of course, no matter how diversified, from phonetics to literature to poetry to whatever. Dr. [John Philip] Couch [romance languages professor] was an excellent professor of modern theater. I just enjoyed all of the spectrums, from old French all the way to very modern. And I enjoyed lots of other courses as well as the language courses. In fact, I took anthropology and liked it so much I decided to do a double major in it after one course [laughs] and had some wonderful sociology courses, as well as anthropology, and that was great. And of course Dr. [Harriet] Kupferer was an outstanding anthropology professor.

MF: Yes, so a pretty broad liberal arts education?

PH: Yes.

MF: Were you *Phi Beta Kappa* [academic honor society in liberal arts and sciences]?

PH: Yes.

MF: I figured. [laughs]

PH: [laughs] Yes.

MF: Did you—you lived in the dorms?

PH: Yes, I lived in a dorm.

MF: What was dorm life like?

PH: Oh, I still reminisce with friends who went to school at UNCG the same time I did. My first dorm was Guilford Dorm, which at that time was freshmen, a nice, old dorm, and I just

thought it was really charming and pleasant.

MF: Yes.

PH: When I was a freshman, we had not only to be in at 10:00 [pm] on school nights and 11:00 [pm] on the weekend, but we also had to have our lights out. And I think back that my roommate and I thought that we were just absolutely wild women because we would take a tensor lamp into our closets and put towels under the door, so that we could read after lights out. [laughs]

MF: What—would someone randomly come by—because this is how they used to do it.

PH: Yes, they used to bring a chair and stand and look through the transom to see if their lights were out. And you could get little campus things, where you had to stay on campus for the weekend. You could be campused if you didn't observe the little rules and regulations like lights out and, of course, much stricter campusing if you were out after the dorm closed and went places that were restricted. When you came to UNCG as a freshman, it seems that I remember I had to have a list of places that my mother approved my going. You couldn't just go anywhere off campus. You could always sign out to home and to this little list of restricted places that your parents had approved, and if they found that you went somewhere other than your list of restricted places, you could be restricted even more. [laughs]

MF: Oh, no.

PH: It was a far cry from today's campus. We also had a dress code, and in order to go to gym class we had to wear a raincoat. No matter what the weather was outside, we would wear it over these funny little one-piece gym dresses. I always remember them. They were ugly on everybody. Sort of white, one piece with skirts that today would probably make a decent mini-skirt. They were outrageously short.

MF: Yeah.

PH: And we had to wear rain coats over them, and certainly no pants to class, but I think in 1967 or '68 the dress requirement was changed and students were allowed to wear jeans and pants and so forth, but up until then—

MF: Yeah, I think it was '68.

PH: —only skirts.

MF: I think that Cherry [Mann] Callahan [Class of 1971, 1987 PhD]—I can't remember what her maiden name was. I think she was partly responsible for that.

PH: Somewhere, I know it was somewhere in there. Yes.

MF: And I think also in '68 or '69 the same group of students somehow got the administration to agree that students who were old enough could have beer in their room.

PH: Yes, that's probably true, too.

MF: Yes, so—and it seems—I've interviewed in the past few days somebody who attended between '70 and '74 and someone between '74 and '78, the changes that occurred between '69 and '72 were really dramatic.

PH: They were. I was graduating in '69 and then going on to graduate school. It was a tremendous change from being a student and finishing up in '69 to being in graduate school. As far as the restrictions—of course, I wasn't living on campus at the time, but I then started teaching at UNCG in 1972, and it was like another whole place from where I had been a student because there were so many changes in what was allowed. We were—literally, if our brothers or fathers walked through the dorm to help us move in, we were required to walk ahead and yell, "Man on the hall." And certainly no men, other than that during move in time or move out, would ever have been allowed on a girls' hall. Of course, it's very changed—and changed a great deal the early seventies.

MF: Yes, and I think that I found out this morning that the Class of '72 was the class that did away with class jackets, class structure with like class president, and so forth, and did away with a lot of the traditions.

PH: Yes. We had a class song, class jacket and just everything, and for those who chose to take part, there was a lot of camaraderie that way.

MF: Yes, and also since you were a graduate student here at the time, I suppose you saw the (well, for lack of a better description) blossoming of Tate Street as sort of the focal point.

PH: [laughs] Yes, yes, I did see that.

MF: [laughs]

PH: Quite a bit of blossoming. I think that's when they planted the prickly bushes there on the hill. [laughs]

MF: On the hill. [laughs] By the [Brown] Music Building, yes.

PH: Yes, I do remember that. I remember that the Red Door was the infamous place that was off limits, the only place on Tate Street that was off limits to students.

MF: The Red Door?

PH: It was called the Red Door. Freshman year that was the place of infamy that all of us, of course—

MF: Was that a bar?

PH: Yes, it was a bar that all of us looked forward to going to. I don't know whether it was off limits to only freshmen or to everybody, but I know it was off limits freshman year. So, of course, we always talked about how we were going to go there.

MF: Yes, of course, yes.

PH: Of course. [laughs] What else? When we were going to sneak out of the dorm and do all these other things, which, of course, a lot of us didn't do.

MF: Yes.

PH: But it was funny to have so many restrictions—what was off limits and what was on limits.

MF: There were two things I was thinking of, and I'll go with the one because I can't remember what the other one was right off the top of my head. Also, in—during the time you were here, they started admitting black students. Well, they had started earlier, but I mean—

PH: Yes, yes.

MF: —it increased for more than just two or three per class during the sixties because, let's see, '58, I guess, was the first time they admitted them, [Ed. note: the first African American students were admitted in fall 1956] and there were only two, and so up until mid-sixties there were only like maybe two or three admitted a year, and it increased a little more.

PH: And I know that had to be difficult. I had a very good friend who is black and who was one of the first students who came to UNCG.

MF: Oh, who?

PH: Thomisene Oliver [Strickland, Class of 1969], from the eastern part of the state. Tommie and I became friends because we were both French majors, and we also traveled to Canada and studied at Laval University [Quebec City, Quebec, Canada] in 1967, and then we traveled after that down to Montreal to the Expo [Universal and International Exposition], and then to New York City where we both had relatives nearby. This was the time of major race riots in Newark [New Jersey]—

MF: Sure.

PH: —and that area, and we left Canada where there was just not a racial problem at all, where



we were completely comfortable—

MF: Right.

PH: —came back into New York State, and especially into Newark, and recognized that things were certainly not as wonderful as they had been in Canada. I remember how awkward it was for Tommie, and it was just very uncomfortable, and it had really difficult for her to be one of maybe ten or twelve black students, if that many, on campus at the time because this was 1967. And we were good friends, and we talked about a lot of things, and it was a very hard time. I would not have liked to have been in her shoes, but she stuck with it.

MF: What kinds of things? Because I'm sure from what I've heard from some people is that there wasn't necessarily the blatant racism on campus, but usually that occurred when you went off campus, but that there were a lot of sort of racial undertones and exclusion more than anything else, is what I've heard.

PH: Well, because I had a close friend who was black, I probably wasn't around the exclusion or wasn't as aware of it. I didn't see it as much. Tommie really told me about it more than I saw it.

MF: Yes.

PH: But I know that it was—that there certainly were undertones. I never saw blatant examples of just people not wanting to be around blacks.

MF: Yes.

PH: Tommie and I moved in to International House one of the years we were in school, which was a nice place for lots of different things going on. And that was probably a much more comfortable situation for her dorm-wise than other dorms had been.

MF: Oh, sure.

PH: But I'm sure there were those undertones, but I think people probably just didn't express those feelings in front of me because I was—I guess I was kind of associated with a black.

MF: Yes.

PH: So I didn't see it as much.

MF: What kinds of things do you remember her having the most problems with with being one of the very few black students on campus? I would suppose it had something to do with really a lack of support, first of all.

PH: Probably that and just feeling kind of alone.

MF: Yes.

PH: I think it's a very difficult feeling to feel that you're so different and to leave a school that's all black, where you went to high school, and then to go to an all-white school, except a very tiny group and just to feel different.

MF: Yes.

PH: And I'm sure there was some sense of people not wanting to be around her or being frightened, just not understanding what it's like to be around a black person.

MF: Yes, yes. I'm still trying to think of what that other question I had for you was.

PH: [coughs]

MF: I had it, and now—

PH: Maybe it will come to you.

MF: It's one of those days. Yes. One other question though—it was now a coeducational school, and more and more males came each year and how—did you have any sense of how that seemed to change the tone of campus life over that period, even through the period when you were working on your master's?

PH: [pause] That's probably too short a period to really—for me to notice changes.

MF: Yes.

PH: I noticed changes when I started teaching. I think in the early seventies to— towards the end of the seventies, I think we had a very strong feeling that this was really a coed campus. When I started to school, it was really barely coed. I can remember that if we were in a dorm, and I met someone named Missy, and I said, "Missy, are you taking chemistry?" "Yeah, I'm taking chemistry." "Where do you sit?" "Oh, I sit two rows behind and slightly to the left of Mr. Pinnix," because in a class of maybe two hundred chemistry students, there would be five men.

MF: Yes.

PH: And so we knew where we sat in relationship to the five men in the class.

MF: Right.

PH: They were sort of an oddity in any given class. Even so, I did become very good friends with one of the male students that I met in freshman year, and we were friends throughout all four years. His name is Jack Pinnix [Class of 1969, MA 1975], and he eventually became editor of *The Carolinian* [student newspaper]. He also participated in this Institute of Middle America.

MF: Oh, okay.

PH: And I got to know him even better there. And he's now an attorney and just—I haven't seen him in a long time, but a very special person. I have later discovered some other people, other men who were on campus at the same time I was, but I didn't know them. But Jack was the only one of the men students that I knew on campus, but I'm sure that, just like blacks, it was a difficult thing to be in such a minority.

MF: Oh, sure.

PH: And it was very much a minority. We were just barely out of being a women's college. I think in the four years I was an undergraduate, I saw that change some, but not significantly. I would say probably, after—in graduate school, it was just a whole other ballpark because it wasn't a campus thing. Many, many students in graduate school were from off campus so—

MF: Oh yes. Well, it's still that way.

PH: Yes, but I would say that after that, when I started teaching, I really started to notice more and more men in classes so that it didn't look like a women's school with a few token males.

MF: Yes. Yes. Boy, you started teaching during a really time of great change at the school.

PH: [laughs] It was a time of great change. It was a very exciting time. I really enjoyed it so much. I enjoyed the contact with the students and the things that were going on, but it was a time of great change.

MF: Do you remember how—I remember what I was going to ask you now. Do you remember how some of the events, like with the civil rights movement and things going on in Vietnam—do you remember how any of that affected the campus?

PH: I think we had lots of heated discussions. In dorms, I think people were very opinionated. They were either very much opposed to Vietnam [War, military conflict that occurred in Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia from 1955-1975 between North and South Vietnam, aided by the United States], which seems to be, as I recollect, more of the sentiment than the pro-Vietnam.

MF: Yes.

PH: I think there were definite strong feelings. I can remember reading things in *The Carolinian* and hearing discussions talking about it with friends. I think there was a lot of discussion of what was going on at the time, and people had a real feel for current events. Racial situation: same thing—probably not as vocal as the Vietnam situation.

MF: Yes, but there were not the same type of sort of large student demonstrations here that there were on other campuses.

PH: No, no.

MF: Although I think in '69 there was the what? The cafeteria workers strike?

PH: I think so. There were some but nothing like Kent State [University, Kent, Ohio, where, on May 4, 1970, the Ohio National Guard killed four unarmed students, who were protesting the American invasion of Cambodia] or demonstrations in other places. Part of it is probably because this was still just barely out of being a women's school, and women were not being as assertive at that time in this type of activity as we would become later.

MF: Do you remember anything about the cafeteria workers strike?

PH: No, I don't.

MF: Yes. I think usually what I find is the only thing people remember is that, "Well, I went and ate somewhere else."

PH: Yes, that's probably what I did. I don't remember. I seem to remember that there was one, but it doesn't leave a strong memory with me.

MF: Oh, okay. I know I probably skipped over some things, so if there's anything you can think of that glares as a missing piece.

PH: I'm sure there are many things I'm not thinking of but—

MF: Oh, you'll think of them tonight.

PH: [laughs] I'll think of them tonight when we're not talking.

MF: Yes, yes, that's what usually happens, yes. Thank you very much.

PH: You're welcome; you're welcome.

[End of Interview]